

MINUTES

Quarterly Meeting of the MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION

Held, pursuant to notice
Tuesday, April 5, 2005 — 10:00 AM
1719 Southridge Drive
Jefferson City, Missouri

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Roll Call
In attendance: **Chairman Emmett Fairfax; Vice Chairman Carson Ross; Member Joseph Frank; Member Bernadette Miller; Member General Arvid West**
- C. Introductions
Guests and staff present.
 - 1. Guest: **Col. Wayne Medley**, MO Military Funeral Honors Program; **David Shafer**, Dept. Commander American Legion; **Lynn Dorrell**, Adjutant American Legion; **James Ernie Lee**, President MAVO; **James Whitfield**, Western Area Coordinator, MO Military Funeral Honors; **Gary Campbell**, Director, Columbia VA Medical Center; **Glen Struchtemeyer**, Director, St. Louis VA Medical Center; **Jack Matthews**, President MVC Foundation, Inc.; **Kevin Inkley**, St. Louis VA Medical Center; **John Eckhoff**, St. Louis County Human Services; **Richard Heigert**, American Legion; **James Hughes**, VFW & MVC Foundation Inc.; **Mike Strout**, St. Louis; **Larry Daniels**, DAV;
 - 2. Staff: **Ronald Taylor**, Executive Director; **Jill Talken**, Executive Secretary; **Sharon Keith**, Director, Service to Veterans Program; **Hal Dulle**, Deputy Director; **Jess Rasmussen**, Director Higginsville Cemetery; **Anne Payne**, Superintendent of Homes; **Tim Norton**, Director of Planning and Property Management; **Stan Baughn**, Director Veterans Benefits Awareness Program; **Pat Rowe Kerr**, Veterans Benefits Awareness Coordinator; **Bill Ransdall**, Coordinator Fort Leonard Wood Cemetery; **Bonnie McNeill-Boyt**, Training Technician; **Dennis Nolte**, Service to Veterans Program
- D. Approval of January 25, 2005 Commission Meeting Minutes.
Commissioner Ross made a motion to accept the minutes and Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as recorded.

- E. Recognition of STV Program Employee of the Year Award -Veteran Service Officer Dennis Nolte. Sharon Keith, Director STV Program presented Mr. Nolte with a plaque and expressed her appreciation for his continued outstanding service to veterans and their survivors.

Ron Taylor also noted that Cheryl Clark from the Mexico Veterans Home was chosen as MVC Employees of the Month for January 2005 and has been picked as DPS Employee of the Month for March. A reception will be held on Tuesday, April 12 at Commission Headquarters.

Ron Taylor announced to the Commissioners that Sharon Keith, Director STV program will be retiring August 1, 2005. Ms. Keith has been employed with the Commission for 17 years. He noted that claims are processed in Milwaukee from 14 states and they have informed MVC that of all states submitting claims Missouri has been most recognizable for the quality of work on claims. Mr. Taylor stated that due to her hard work and consistent devotion Ms. Keith makes it possible. Ms. Keith stated that she plans to volunteer at events for the Commission whenever possible.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

Management Report: Executive Director Comments: Ronald Taylor

Commission Update – Ron Taylor reported on results of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs Conference held last month. Ron Taylor and Hal Dulle attended the conference in Washington. Mr. Taylor noted that MVC had been very concerned about the National Budget proposal which would reduce eligibility or severely restricting eligibility for per diem for veterans in nursing homes. The original proposal would have limited it to only those who were service connected POW's and certain catastrophically disabled veterans. MVC's estimates show less than 20% of our residents currently would qualify for per diem and the potential loss of income roughly 20 million dollars, however Congress has indicated that they will not be approving the proposal. This year they will continue the same eligibility criteria though some concerns regarding long term care. There will be a follow-up to the CARES Commission who will look at the long term policy. States will need to track carefully. Also discussed at a workshop during the conference was Medicaid. Half the states veterans homes are currently Medicaid approved. Mr. Taylor was informed by some of the participating states that it is difficult and complicated but it can provide a reliable source of income, however their final opinion was that if you do not have to go there don't do it. MVC has a task force coming up with a detailed study of all the implications to better understand what all is involved. It's anticipated that within the next 15 to 30 days to have in draft form on white paper information to share with the Commissioners at the next meeting. There

has been some delay on getting information back from other state agencies.

Pat Rowe Kerr and others have been working with Missouri National Guard trying to create a system to assist returning home soldiers. He stated this is consistently improving however it is not perfect, but finally at the national level things have improved. A "Memorandum of Agreement" has been reached between the VA national level and the National Guard Bureau to try and develop a framework for dealing with this problem and they are strongly recommending that each state develop a "Memorandum of Agreement" focusing on their particular issues. MVC received a model of the state of Washington's agreement. Mr. Taylor and Mr. Dulle will be meeting with the Governor's office and the State Adjutant to discuss how we might appropriately do that. Mr. Taylor stated hopefully over the next month or two that will enable us to improve our ability to identify those and get them into the system. Gary Campbell, Director VAMC Columbia stated that VISN 15 Network Director, Dr. Almenoff has set up a point of contact from the state of and Kansas and Steven Gaither from VAMC Columbia to coordinate setting up meetings to get everyone together to work with the Adjutant at the National Guard.

Ron Taylor noted while in Washington he learned the law which gives Iraqi and Afghanistan soldiers returning home 2 years of medical treatment without having to go through the process of providing income information, the interpretation given in Washington is different than MVC understood originally, if after the 2 years period they would complete the income information and be placed into a category and if placed in category 8 they would either be re-enrolled or if the Secretary didn't authorize they would be out. Washington says if they are enrolled they stay enrolled even if category 8. Mr. Taylor noted we may want to be talking to those veterans and letting them know if they have any health issues they need to get enrolled within that 2 year period. In addition they need to be reminded that they only have 90 days to sign up for dental care.

Lexington Project – Mr. Taylor presented to the Commissioners a recommendation that the Commission start the process in selling the property either by public sale or by transfer to another state agency. In there interim it is recommended that the Commission prepare a "Memorandum of Agreement" as amended with a date ending April 5, 2006 or until the sale of the property that the group of golfers that have expressed an interest in using be authorized to continue usage. They will be given 60 days notification of the sale. If it exceeds the "Memorandum of Agreement" ending date then we will re-negotiate the "Memorandum of Agreement". The proceeds of the sale of the property would go into the trust fund. Vice Chairman Ross made a motion to accept the

recommendation as amended. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. By a voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

The Missouri Veterans Commission will be relocating to the Jefferson Building due to the state cutting back on leased facilities and moving agencies into state owned buildings. MVC has concerns regarding parking and handicap accessibility. There will be no cost to the Commission with moving expenses. OA has assured they will accommodate our needs. The Commission had recently expressed interest in acquiring additional office space and this will give us 12,000 sq. feet total. Commissioner West has agreed to be the Commissions liaison and work with OA on our needs.

Video Project - The Commission is waiting for OA-Purchasing to complete the review and approval process. To date the Commission has no new information. If approved the funding will be available over the term of the contract. This may require a special meeting within the next week to 10 days.

Budget Update – House mark up has begun. MVC's request for a fund switch from the Governor was authorized and 13.8 million dollars from Home Fund was switched to GR, plus an increase of 2.9 million dollars for E & E in the Homes, and whatever pay increases recommended which is still at about 1%. This is a total increase for MVC of 19 to 20 million dollars. This still does not get us where we need to be long term so we still have some issues to work on. Statewide they are trying to cut 1 billion dollars from GR budget, MVC is the only agency that has a 200% increase in its GR budget this year. The Chairman of the Subcommittee at the end of session noted the importance of the Veterans Commissions work.

There have been some concerns with the CI Budget, the Governor did not originally recommend the 1 million dollars for the Fort Leonard Wood Veterans Cemetery because of concerns the money might not be there. We have re-examined what we really need to have the next two years and we have also had some changes in our projections and the understanding is that during the mark-up hearing during the CI Budget that we will have ½ million dollars placed into FY06-07 budget to continue with the project and the other ½ million dollars to complete will be available the next budget cycle.

Missouri Veterans Homes: Anne Payne, Superintendent of Homes

Homes Program – Anne Payne reported that the Homes Average Daily Census is at 1,119 as of the end of February. The Homes is continuing to fill up expansion beds in St. Louis and Mt. Vernon currently the Homes are in the upper 80's in census and they will continue to gage carefully how much service we can provide to veterans given our fixed level of

resources. The Homes are still experiencing some vacancy challenges especially in St. Louis. They are monitoring recruitment and induction for licensed nurses which continues to be a challenge.

Ms. Payne noted that the Homes Program Census Report shows a decrease in waiting list from over 1,000 at the last meeting to 913 due to the new integrated data base which works across all seven homes. This now allows MVC to capture the actual number of veterans rather than looking at numbers of veterans who may have applied at multiple homes. The 913 on the list are actual numbers waiting for admittance in the Homes.

Ms. Payne reported this week the Cape Girardeau Veterans Home started the renovation project that will cover a new HVAC system, new dining activity room for the special care unit, a solarium addition to the dining room as well as some new flooring and painting. During the process of renovation it will be necessary to scaled back the number of veterans to probably 128–130 out of the total 150 beds. She noted there will be a decrease in census until that project is completed.

Cameron Veterans Home pilot project - last August a team began looking at the challenges the Homes have with the fixed level of resources and try to maximize the efficiency and the use of that fixed resource through a standardized care model. Through the review work in that team it was determined there were some things that the homes could do to become more efficient. 1) Scheduling – currently all the Homes schedule on an every other weekend off basis in the nursing department. This has required the use of a lot of overtime. With the care model this allows the homes to use a compression schedule of six different schedules that get away from the standard three shifts every other weekend off. This compression schedule may be a combination of 12 hours shifts, 10 hour shifts or some other combination depending on the willingness of the employee. The Homes are also offering incentives on some of the shifts primarily on the most difficult shifts to fill which are the weekends, so those volunteering to work those difficult shifts will receive some premiums. Another component to the care model beyond the compression scheduling has to do with what the Homes terms as a universal worker concept. There are many activities that the team across all 15 departments in our nursing homes do. They reviewed all the duties that the nursing department was currently performing and it was decided there were some things that take up the nurses' time that do not require a license certification so they are asking all departments to chip in with other duties to assist our veterans. This project is currently being tested at the Cameron Veterans Home to see if it works and if they want to use in the balance of our Homes. Ms. Payne noted that with any change there are always people that want to question that change, and over the past week when the project was started there has been a lot of inquiries from residents, staff, families and legislators. They will be addressing each of

the concerns that are brought forward. She noted the majority of the staff is excited about the project and a lot of communication was involved. Vice Chairman Ross informed Ms. Payne that he is certainly interest in seeing the results from the pilot project. Chairman Fairfax expressed his appreciation to Ms. Payne for her work with the Homes program.

Mr. Fairfax noted that all seven homes were recently inspected and all received a deficiency free evaluation and he congratulated Ms. Payne.

Construction Update: Tim Norton, Director of Properties

Construction Update – Tim Norton reported on construction updates.

Ft. Leonard Wood Veterans Cemetery – the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been given approval to complete the unexploded ordnance survey, environmental baseline study and environmental study.

Cape Girardeau Veterans Home - HVAC project has been awarded and has just started construction.

St. Louis Veterans Home – roof replacement (due to hail damage), security fence around back and replacement of exterior doors project has been awarded. A pre-construction meeting was held on April 4th.

Springfield Veterans Cemetery – columbarium wall pre-bid meeting was held on April 4th. He stated construction is to begin sometime in May.

Bill Ransdall, Coordinator Fort Leonard Wood Cemetery informed the Commissioners that he and other MVC staff met General Castro and U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to brief them on the land transfer and also toured the site. He advised of the commitment from the legislature of the ½ million dollars to fund the cemetery and that the project is moving on.

Service to Veterans Program: Sharon Keith, Director, Service to Veterans Program

Service to Veterans – Sharon Keith reported that the Service Officers have been busy. She informed the Commissioners the total compensation and pension payments made by VA to Missouri veterans increased over 169 million dollars more from 1999–2004 and is still increasing. She noted from FY03 to FY04 there is a decrease in veteran population for the state of Missouri, however there was increase in dollar amount paid in

benefits. Mr. Taylor noted that a lot more counties in Missouri are above the national average in benefits and some of the areas below the national average we will be working on. He advised that interviews are being conducted this week by the Vice Chairman and himself for the Minority Veterans Benefits Coordinator position and they should be able to make an offer by the end of the week. Once this position is filled it will give MVC another option to reach veterans in some of those areas below average.

The Veteran Service Officers have participated in two Supermarkets over the past three weeks, and have done presentations and freedom salute ceremonies held across the state.

Ms. Keith reported that she will be conducting interviews next week for the Service Officer position in the St. Louis region.

Chairman Fairfax thanked Ms. Keith for the STV Programs hard work.

Cemeteries Update: Jess Rasmussen, Director Higginsville Cemetery

Cemetery Program – Jess Rasmussen reported to the Commissioners that the current interment rate is 2,813 burials and 10,426 pre-certifications for all four cemeteries.

A recent inquire from a lady about donating \$25,000 to the Bloomfield Veterans Cemetery Assistance League in memory of her brother has agreed to donate the money with no stipulations, that they may use the money as they see fit.

Mr. Rasmussen reported that last fall an issue arose concerning the Funeral Consumers Protection Alliance. They challenge our requirement that a funeral director be present for full casket burials as required by state regulation. MVC forwarded the information to the Attorney General's office for legal opinion. They responded by saying there is nothing in the FTC's rules which prevents the state from establishing appropriate regulations to control the funeral industry. Any change would require a court challenge and Mr. Rasmussen stated that there has been no indication by the FCPA that they will do that.

Vice Chairman Ross noted his concerns in the low numbers for the Jacksonville Cemetery. Mr. Rasmussen reported that they have sent out information to Funeral Homes and that they will continue to advertise to raise public awareness.

Vice Chairman Ross advised that Swan Lake has discontinued advertising in the KC Star and that he recently received a flyer mailed to his home

which indicates that Peacetime & Wartime Veterans are entitled to a FREE burial space for the veterans and their spouse and this is your final notice. Mr. Taylor stated that Mr. Boyles contacted him regarding his invitation to the January Commission meeting and stated that he would like to invite the Commissioners to tour the facility. To date no invitation has been received.

VSO Grants: Hal Dulle, Deputy Director

VSO Grant Program- Hal Dulle had no new information to report on. He stated that a report will be available at the next commission meeting.

Veterans Benefits Awareness Program: Stan Baughn, Director Veterans Benefits Awareness

Benefits Supermarkets – Stan Baughn reported two Supermarkets have been held this year; Palmyra and St. Roberts. Mr. Baughn recognized David Shafer, Dept. Commander American Legion for his excellent job in organizing the St. Roberts Supermarket. He noted that five Supermarkets are currently scheduled in the St. Louis area. He also noted that he hopes the new Minority Veterans Coordinator will be able to assist with the Supermarket in the Kansas City area like John Eckhoff has done in the St. Louis. He noted that MVC has increased a lot in the last 4 to 5 years. Missouri is up to 593 million dollars coming into the state for compensation/pension to veterans. He noted that he would like to think the Commission took a big part of the credit for that with the Supermarkets and the toll-free number. Analyzing data from the US to the State, Missouri has increased between 1-2% over the national average. He stated that not only the veteran population has declined but the revenue has increased. Mr. Baughn thanked Sharon Keith, STV Officers and Service Organizations for their hard work at the Supermarkets.

Hal Dulle advised that he and Stan Baughn conducted the first round of interviews for the Minority Veterans Benefits Coordinator. Over 125 applications were received and were narrowed down to 4. They hoped to have the new employee on board by May 1st. Vice Chairman Ross stated that this position should certainly make a difference in helping to turn Jackson County from below the national average to above.

Chairman Fairfax thanked Stan Baughn for his great job in working with the Supermarket Program. He stated the Supermarkets are tremendous for this state.

Outreach: Pat Rowe Kerr, Veterans Benefits Awareness Coordinator

Outreach – Pat Rowe Kerr distributed to the Commissioners the GAO report put out in February on Military Pay. The report describes the financial hardships for injured Army National Guard and Reserve Soldiers.

The Department of Defense has created an “Army One Source” mirroring similar to Operation Outreach Program where you can contact a number and the case managers there can save some of the telephone calls in getting assistance for the soldiers.

Ms. Kerr thanked John Eckhoff for assisting in raising \$8,000 for a family living in Columbia. The soldier’s wife broke both arms and was unable to care for herself and children. Pat assessed the family’s need on a two month plan and determined an amount required. The soldier was able to also come home for 3 weeks to assist with this wife and children.

Ms. Kerr announced that the Mark Cuban Fund will be awarding a \$30,000 grant to Specialist Wake.

She reported that over \$100,000 has been distributed out to our men and women who are out there protecting us. These funds were coordinated by the Commission in the past six months.

The VFW Unmet Needs Concert held recently had soldiers/families from six different states represented. Over 1,600 service men and woman and their families to Kansas City to attend the event. She reported that it was a very successful event and the following morning a National Coalition was formed by several Foundations and Outreach Program Directors to assist soldiers returning home and the Missouri Veterans Commission has joined in these efforts.

Ms. Kerr thanked the VA for working with MVC in quickly processing benefits and educational packages for the service men and women returning home.

An American Legion Post that is closing has contacted Ms. Kerr regarding donating funds to service men & women who are injured. She will be traveling to St. Louis and joining some of the families who will be receiving those dollars and gas cards.

She reported that the Missouri National Guard continues to grow in family support. The Guard with their Family Readiness Groups have invited the Commission into make contact individually with service servicemen and women to assist them in obtaining federal benefits. She reported that MVC is also working with the video folks to rent some video (Branson Show Stoppers, Living in Retirement, and etc) to get into our Homes Program for our residents.

Ms. Kerr recently attended a VFW Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Conference held in Kansas City. Dr. Stewart Munroe, Chairman University of Missouri -Kansas City Dept. of Medicine and Lt. Col. Charles E. Woods were guest speakers provided statistics at the conference that she plans to share with the Commissioners.

The Commission is receiving national recognition by NPR and CSPAN and the Commission recently received a call from Department of Army Gifts and Trusts and they exploring a very large invitation only golf tournament in the St. Louis area and they would like to charge \$1,000 to \$3,000 to tee off and donate their contributions to Operation Outreach. If perhaps the Military Relief Fund bill passes they would donate the fund there. There is a possibility that Oliver North may be speaking at the event.

Some of the staff of the Commission attended a joint press conference held by Lt. Governor Kinder and the State of Illinois Lt. Governor Quinn held at Jefferson Barracks regarding Military Relief Fund.

The State of Missouri's Operation Outreach Program has been granted access to Office of the Surgeon General –MODS. Medical Operational Data System which is a tracking system that allows us to track our injured soldiers. They have regularly been providing Ms. Kerr with information on the servicemen and women.

Vice Chairman Ross thanked Ms. Kerr for showing such enthusiasm with her work. Chairman Fairfax noted how important it is to fill in the gaps for the soldiers returning home.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

Legislative Update: Hal Dulle reported to the Commissioners on the status of the following bills:

HB163 & SB199- Removes the application deadlines and revises the residency requirements for the World War II and Korean War Veterans Medallion programs. Bill is currently in the Senate.

HB437- Authorizes a contribution check-off box on state income tax forms for the Missouri Military Family Relief Fund and modifies the educational assistance grant program of the Missouri National Guard. Bill is currently in the Senate.

HB412- Authorizes an individual income tax deduction for certain military retirement benefits received by a taxpayer. MAVO supports this bill.

SB66- Establishes a tuition grant program for children of deceased military members. Pat Kerr advised this bill also has SB175 combined into it.

HB453- Authorizes the Governor to convey state property located in Phelps County to the City of St. James. Bill is currently in the Senate.

Vice Chairman Ross asked Mr. Dulle if any legislation had been proposed regarding distribution of Gaming Funds. Mr. Dulle reported that HB870 which changes the distribution of some funds in the Gaming Commission Fund was introduced by Representative Jackson and would add additional funds to the VCCITF.

Gary Campbell, Director, Columbia VA Medical Center advised that Congress does want to put funding back into the State Homes Funding. He also noted they will be moving forward with the Missouri National Guard concerning the "Memorandum of Agreement".

Colonel Wayne Medley, MO Military Funeral Honors Program reported they have just completed 812 military funeral honors services for the month of March. He also reported that Missouri lost one of the last WWI Veterans, Fred Robb from Springfield, Missouri. Mr. Robb was buried at the Springfield State Veterans Cemetery.

Jack Matthews, MVC Foundation, Inc. advised the Commissioners and guests that the 4th Annual "Chipping in for Veterans" golf tournament will be held on Friday, September 9th at Railwood Golf Club. He also stated that the Foundation is attempting to add two new members to the board. James Hughes, VFW has agreed to accept the invitation and they are still trying to secure Joe Maxwell.

General Castro from Ft. Leonard Wood will be speaking to House members in the House Lounge today.

MAVO meeting today at 1:30 p.m. at DAV Building

NEXT MEETING

The next Commission meeting date and location will be announced at a later date.

With no further business before the Commission the meeting was adjourned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald L. Taylor", written in a cursive style.

Ronald L. Taylor, Secretary